

Making Reentry Work in Tribal Communities Transcript

Okori Christopher:

Welcome everyone. I'd like to turn this over to Julius Dupree from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Julius Dupree:

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Julius Dupree and I'm one of the policy advisors and BJA's corrections, reentry and justice reform policy team. I'm so pleased be able to welcome you to this webinar. One of the many resources BJA has supported as part of the Second Chance month.

Julius Dupree:

The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the US Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. That's been BJA's grants, training and technical assistance, and policy development services provide state, local, and tribal governments and non-profit organizations with the resources and best practices they need to help individuals, communities, and agencies across the country recognize the importance of reentry and their role in building second chances.

Julius Dupree:

Today's online offering talks about who we serve and what our resources are available. And as you can see, as it relates to who, with state and local governments, Native American, Tribal governments, private and nonprofits, as well as colleges and universities, and today's online offering will actually focus on American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Understanding and strengthening American Indian and Alaska Native identity is vital for reentry success of these populations. Culturally responsive programs are important. Reentry programs and Tribal communities are more effective when they feature culturally traditional services and approaches that are appropriate for the population. This includes Indigenous healing methods.

Julius Dupree:

American Indian and Alaskan Native people are overrepresented in correctional settings and face unique challenges in reentry. Effective reentry programming for these populations must be culturally responsive. We have already began releasing this year's funding opportunities to provide state, local, and Tribal governments, private and nonprofit organizations, and colleges and universities with the tools, training and resources they need to support people experiencing and working in reentry. A number of Tribes have been awarded Second Chance Act grant funds over the years to plan, implement, reentry strategies and their communities. So please visit BJA's website, www.bja.gov to learn more about the suite of the fiscal year 2022 Second Chance Act and other reentry grant programs and consider how they might support your reentry efforts.

Julius Dupree:

BJA funds and supports the National Reentry Resource Center also known as NRRC, which is the nation's primary source of information and guidance sort of reentry and the host for Second Chance month, please visit www.buildsecondchances.org to access Second Chance month resources, which includes live learning events, videos, podcasts, and publications, and continue to visit the NRRC after April to learn about the latest reentry related news, funding opportunities, learning events and resources.

Julius Dupree:

And thank you for your time and for joining us for this event. At this point, we're going to, I'm going to go ahead and hand it back to Okori so that he can hand it to Michelle Perry, with the Corrections and Community Engagement Technical Assistance Center. She's your deputy director there, and she's going to introduce the session. Thank you.

Michelle Perry:

Hello. On behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the American Institutes for Research, welcome to today's webinar, effective reentry practices and tribal communities: promoting health, wellness, and cultural lifeways for returning tribal citizens. I am Michelle Perry, deputy project director of CCETAC, the Corrections and Community Engagement Technical Assistance Center funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and housed at the American Institutes for Research.

Michelle Perry:

The American Institutes for Research records webinars in order to access them following the live webinar event. This is a notice to participants that this webinar is being recorded. If you do not wish for your video to be in the recording, please disable your camera feature now. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research, delivers technical assistance through relationship-based methods, and partners with PR organizations to strengthen our technical assistance approach. AIR delivers

technical assistance for a subset of Second Chance Act grantees through the Corrections and Community Engagement Technical Assistant Center. I would now like to turn things over to Stephanie Autumn, CCETAC coach for Second Chance Act Tribal grantees, who will be your moderator for today's section session. Stephanie works with Tribal grantees and non-Tribal grantees that have a large number of clients from Tribal communities. Stephanie

Stephanie Autumn:

Welcome everyone out there in Indian country. I am so honored to bring this talented panel of experts to today's best practices in Indian Country webinar, developed and produced by the Corrections and Community Engagement Technical Assistance Center. Today, our presenters will be Jane McFeat, she serves as the program manager for the Welcome Home program for the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe in Washington; Tony Fish, who serves as the program manager for the Muscogee Creek Nation Reintegration program in Oklahoma; Elise Townsend, the reentry coordinator for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in Arizona; Hazel Hindsley, the director for the Tribal Offender Reintegration Program for the St. Croix Band of Chippewa Indians. I'll be serving as your host. I hope that you will take note of the conversation in the chat box and connect with our presenters in terms of how you're building out or envisioning your reentry program in the future. In our communities in Indian Country, before we start work, we always, we always honor our relatives that are no longer here. We honor the past and our people

Stephanie Autumn:

Because we can't see all of the participants, that are joining us today, part of what we wanted to start off with, besides a prayer and a song to help guide our hearts, to help guide our minds. As we think about our relatives that are incarcerated about those that are going to need help from you and your community, as they return home to themselves, as they return home to their families, as they return home to their community. Part of what we know in our communities and in Indian Country from our ancestors, that we wouldn't be here today without their vision, without their prayers. I would like to hear from everyone that's participating us is if you think about the work that you're doing on behalf of our relatives that are incarcerated or are returning home from incarceration, if you could share a little bit about your vision for your program in the chat box.

Stephanie Autumn:

And if you're just thinking you're joining this webinar, because community is going to be planning a reentry program, going to be looking for funding this year for a reentry program, please share in the chat box, your vision for the program, the work that you're going to be moving forward, and don't be shy. Your vision is important, and it will help all of us that are working in the field to reconnect with you post-this webinar. So I'm going to give everybody about a minute to see if we can share your vision in the chat box.

Stephanie Autumn:

Maybe if everyone is thinking about their vision, I'll come back to it. When we circle back after our presentation. Thank you, Sarah. you for the sharing and starting to pop up. Your vision is to improve the opportunities for success with your clients through being more knowledgeable at Native ways and improving your practices than you for that. Bernard Coleman Seminole Tribe of Florida. Anna Meyer shared her vision is based on a culturally grounded, compassionate response, healing, historical, and personal trauma services. Hazel, thank you for your sharing and Holly, thank you, I see we have lot of visions being shared. I thank you for that. Katie, I see that part of your vision is partnering with the Tribal nation to develop a Native American-specific risk and needs assessment. Thank you for sharing. And we'll be circling back at the end of the webinar to share some of the visions in the chat box..

Stephanie Autumn:

To give you a snapshot of our learning time together, the first part of our time together, we'll be hearing from four diverse Tribal communities that are former Second Chance Act grantees and two grantees that are still current Second Chance Act grantees. They're going to be sharing the best practices, and some of what they've learned on the ground through implementation, and again, really hoping after and learning and hearing from our esteemed presenters that you'll reach out and contact them post this webinar. The second part of our discussion today, we are going to have a round table discussion to home in on some of the best practices on Tribal, state, and federal partnerships, sustainability. And most importantly, how are we giving voice to Tribal citizens with lived experience? We know that those most impacted can really serve on the ground in terms of being able to provide, develop programs that can best serve our returning citizens.

Stephanie Autumn:

The third part, part of our time together, we'll be sharing national reentry resources and tools, and then we'll be turning it over to you all to share a little bit about what you are learning and then we'll have a closing by Tony Fish.

Stephanie Autumn:

So again, would like to thank our presenters from the Port Gamble S'Klallam nation from Muscogee Creek nation, from

the St. Croix Chippewa band of Indians in Wisconsin, thank you for giving your time to help those that are working in the field. And with that, I'll turn it over to Janel McFeat. She serves as the reentry program coordinator for the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe, the welcome home program.

Janel McFeat:

Thank you, Stephanie, can you guys hear me, okay?

Stephanie Autumn:

Yes.

Janel McFeat:

Okay. Thanks. So, I just wanted to say Ruben, if you're still there, that was beautiful. So beautiful. So again, my name is Janel McFeat. I work for the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe as the program manager for the welcome home program and also the strategic planner. And so, although I work for the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe, I'm a Jamestown S'Klallam descendant, but have worked for the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe for the last 12 years. I've been in this practice though for, this will date me, for the last 22 years. And so I'm honored be here today and to share some of our programming that we have implemented in gosh, in the last probably 10 years. I always like to start out strong with this particular slide because our program is a human dignity model. It's relational, it's trauma-informed care. It's centered around community building and using Native American healing practices.

Janel McFeat:

T We believe the reason why we've had such success and we actually reduced our recidivism rate by 81% using this type of model is because we're really taking a focus on that relational piece. And so what we, and the core of our program is is around circle work. You can have the best reentry program out there, but if you don't have community alongside of you supporting this it'll fall flat every single time. We were the recipients of two SCA grants back to back, and we just ended our second one. The first one was focusing on our Port Gamble S'Klallam and Suquamish Tribal communities. Because we had such success and for other reasons I'll get into in a minute, we now served Tribal and non-Tribal participants. But what we noticed was that again, you can have these wonderful reentry programming rooted in Native American culture, but if you don't have the non-native community understanding, listening, understanding trauma informed care, historical trauma, et cetera, and we don't actually see each other, then that creates a problem.

Janel McFeat:

What we're trying to do here, as you see on the screen is we've created a community learning series. And what we do is we put on community listening circles, and that includes law enforcement, formally incarcerated the Tribal community, our success coaches, which I'll talk about a little bit later, the greater community, our BIPOC community, and so on. And what we do in these circles is we ask lighter questions if you will. And this is just like a talking circle and it's a very sacred space. We get to know each other because it's really hard to hate someone when you really see them. this was birthed out of an incident that happened to us here locally in Kitsap County, when we had one of our Suquamish Tribal members shot directly in the face by a white officer at a 4th of July event, probably around the same time as the George Floyd incident happened.

Janel McFeat:

We really were concerned about this, concerned about people in the non-Native community, not understanding the culture, understanding this way of being. We brought this together and then once we got to get where we were getting to know each other, then we can ask the tougher questions. What is systemic racism? What does systemic racism look like in our justice system? How do we treat the Native American population in our justice system? And so those have been pretty instrumental simultaneously. We put on restorative circles. So that includes the person coming out of incarceration, the victim of the crime, the same group, we just talked about: law enforcement, mental health, success coaches. And these are really powerful. And this is why I start with this slide, because if a lot of people ask, what do you think the key to your success is with this program? I would instantly say the Circle work. We definitely have that trauma-informed care piece as well, where we worked with individuals. Hold on one second.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:19:04]

Janel McFeat:

... . I'm just going to mention really quickly that we put together trauma-informed care videos for law enforcement and for the non-native community, and had stories that backed up the science in those videos. And then they get to attend one of those circles.

Janel McFeat:

Our success coaches are trained in Motivational Interviewing and Native American Motivational Interviewing. They are trained as Restorative Circle practitioners. They're trained in trauma-informed care, some are trained and certified. They're trained in historical trauma, and then there's also things that we put on like strengthening families, cultural

classes, and then without listing everything, anything that needs to be removed as a barrier so they do not go back to jail, not to go back to that system, .

Janel McFeat:

One of the things that we've noticed, it's extremely important to have community support. We really work closely with the Tribes and the non-Tribal agencies. When we talk about assisting with educational pathways and job searching, one example I can give is not all the time does a Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal member want to come back to the rez right away, for whatever reason. So what we've done is we've built these community relationships, where they attend our Reentry Task Force, which I'll talk about later, and they can attend our Circles, which we just explained, and they get to understand what we're looking for. And then we can put together an MOA or MOU with them. And we work with Oxford, Worksource, things like that.

Janel McFeat:

Also our success coaches also are recovery coaches, and have lived experience. Some do, and some do not. These success coaches walk from pre to post release. So, I want to make sure that everyone knows here that our wheelhouse is jail, but soon we're starting to work with the prison population as well.

Janel McFeat:

We also work on mindset development, cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectic behavioral therapy that we infuse in the program. One thing I will end with is our Wheel of Wellness. One In the Wheel of Wellness, what we're doing is we're measuring physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual goals, because we don't think that that basic individual service plan is good enough. And so we really need to dig deeper.

Janele McFeat:

And we do a risk and needs assessment we use the criminogenic risk and needs assessment. We use the Wheel of Wellness; we get results from the mental health assessment and the SUD assessment. And then we sit down, and we make a robust plan for these individual service plans together as a team, using motivational interviewing.

Janel McFeat:

In closing, and I know we all have limited time, our program is understanding their story and relational building first. Everything else is secondary. And the human dignity model that we're sharing here today, and we have brochures, and I can see how those could be distributed, is that we're hoping that other programs will move away from this punishment, linear, institutionalized models, and start moving towards restorative models that are a place of hope. And so that's our goal. We've had 12 years of practice with this, where we've received two SCA grants, and now we're state funded. Any questions you have for us, or for this program, please contact me. And I can put my information in the chat. I'm passing to Tony Fish

Stephanie:

Yes, from the Muscogee Creek Nation Reintegration Program.

Janel McFeat:

Thank you so much...

Stephanie:

Tony, take it away.

Tony Fish:

Good afternoon, everybody. It is certainly nice to be with you today on such a great day here at the Muscogee Creek Nation Reservation. I want to talk a little bit about our inception as a program. We were incepted in 2004 by Tribal legislation that basically created the foundation and the structure of our program. Our program went before our nation's Council and was voted on, it took three different times for it to go up. The first two times, the program actually failed to get a majority vote. A lot of that was due to the fact they didn't quite understand how the program would work, or nobody had ever really took on a task such as this, it was either law enforcement or nothing. Or a social service type program. So we were able to pass the resolution to bring the program to fruition, and 2004 is when the reintegration program started staffing.

Tony Fish:

And that's when I come into the picture basically, is I started at ground zero at the very beginning and started working and building a reentry program. At that time, there was not a lot of programs to look to or to basically gained our ideas from. We had a lot of trial and error on some of the things that we'd done. But one of the biggest things for our program was our culture. We look back to our culture and our ways of doing things, and basically just building from there. And we started out with three staff members and today I have 23 staff members. So we've grown tremendously over the last 17 years.

Tony Fish:

And a lot of it has to do with working with the public. For me as a program manager, I've had to learn to walk in two different worlds. I walk in my Native world, which I'm accustomed to, and then walking in non-Native worlds, working with outside agencies, because in the end we have the one goal and that is public safety in mind. And that's also to care of our citizens and to bring them back into an atmosphere of healing and forgiveness, which is our culture. We want to increase public safety and reduce recidivism for individuals and communities from incarceration who are a medium to high risk for recidivism. One of our goals is to decrease recidivism among Muscogee Creek citizens by at least 50%. That goal we thought and believe is achievable. We've been able to, track for two years after release, and we have about a 90% success rate as far as clients not committing any new crimes or going back into the system for anything that has been new.

Tony Fish:

We want to implement sustainable methods of data collection to identify home communities and schools of Tribal members released from prison. We have a database that we have created with one Tribe, and this database allows us to be able to collect the data and helps us to identify the schools that are more at risk for our young people, who may have a higher risk of incarceration. Maybe they have a family history of it and so forth and so on.

Tony Fish:

Also, building capacity within the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. We work very closely with them. We have our intake paperwork online, and I have a staff member who's an outreach coordinator, he goes out to all the prisons and visits with case workers, gets everything set up so anytime they identify somebody that's of Creek ancestry, then we start to process then of bringing them in and to start the application process.

Tony Fish:

You got to be a Creek citizen, you got to be releasing from in-state or federal correctional facility or something of that nature, that makes you eligible for our program. I have a counselor who is on staff as well, and our counselor provides an assessment of the intake, and through his skills he's able to determine what kind of risk we have going in. And then we also, as they go through the program, we do the same testing afterwards and see if we have actually decreased their risk of recidivism. That's very important in knowing, are we making a difference in the things that we're doing?

Tony Fish:

Holistically, when you look at a person, you want to take care of that person's needs, you'll want to look at life sustaining needs first. We feel like that's most important aspect before anything else, because how can we expect them to be able to find employment or to get their fines and fees taken care of if they're worried about having a roof over their head, or where they're going to lay their head tonight. So sustainability in the community is first and foremost, take care of those life sustaining needs. And then we move on from there and take care of the other needs as well.

Tony Fish:

We increase professional development opportunities for all case management workers. I bring in different trainings for them every year. They also have a subscription of Fred Pryor seminars to help them better hone their skills. They can take as many classes as they want. And also looking for triggers to different behaviors and things and know what to look for.

Tony Fish:

Then adapting existing risk assessment tools to measure the influence that we have as our Muscogee culture to help identify anything that maybe we missed along the way. Getting to know our clients is key. Getting to know our families, because we're connected by our families, and if we sit and we talk about where we came from and who our people are and different things like that, then we find a connection that way. And then that opens up an opportunity to be able to visit and really get to know somebody. Then that helps us be able to formalize and to get a case specific plan around that person's individual needs.

Tony Fish:

I think that, especially with the McGirt decision that's been handed down, we've had to really increase our relationship capacity with not only the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, but federal probation and parole. Also, our prosecutors with the Attorney General's offices has really been a challenge for us, because we had a connection there but we didn't have a deep connection. And now we're working side by side, we're working together. Our federal probation and parole officers are here on a regular basis, they're working right along beside my case workers. And we're developing plans together, because we kind of have the same vision as far as decreasing recidivism and also criminal activity. And it's a relationship that we are very proud of, that we've been able to build and be as strong as what we have now. Our outreach coordinator, he goes into the prisons, and he facilitates discussions basically on how we can do a better job, how we can better perform the intake and get the information to and from, and basically policies regarding our Tribal contact.

Tony Fish:

So with that, it's very important to get the word out there. We've been up and going for 17 years now, but I still hear people say, "We never heard about your program. We never knew your program existed." So, with that being said, it's important that we go out there and we work with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, but also just the general public. Anytime there's a health fair, anytime there's a career fair, anytime there's a opportunity for us to go out and kind of spread the word of the things that we do as far as re-entry is concerned. I think it behooves us to take that discussion on and move our program forward and working with the staff to develop their skills.

Tony Fish:

It takes all of us working together in order to create the atmosphere of healing and forgiveness, because here at the reintegration program, we believe every citizen is important, even if you've been to prison, or even if you've been to jail, we believe through our efforts we can reclaim our citizens back into an atmosphere of healing and forgiveness. That's simply our culture, that's who we are. And we believe through our efforts, we can reclaim our citizens back into an atmosphere of healing and forgiveness.

Tony Fish:

So, with that being said, the reintegration program is looking to even expand into the education side of things. We have an aerial construction technical school here on site that we train our citizens to be able to install fiber optic wire and up on the power poles. And it's like an eight-week course, and they go through that and they come out and they can really earn a living for their family, pay their fines and fees, and be self-sustaining again. I know that looking at the program holistically, and looking at all these service gaps have really been important to us, and being able to build in these... With others, build this capacity. I know my time is getting short here. And at this time I want to pass the slides over to Ms. Elise Townsend from the Pascua Yaqui reentry initiative.

Elise Townsend:

Thank you for that introduction. This has been a good journey for Pascua Yaqui, and our community outside of the Pueblo. We embraced this opportunity of an innovative grant to be able to test a lot of things. We first started by meeting with Tony in Oklahoma to see what he did and was so impressed with his program. So thank you, Tony, for that introduction. This is becoming an extremely successful program. We started out, as far as implementation of the program, on October 1st of 2020. And to date, we've been able to help several hundreds of people. The focus was being able to put a Task Force to together, both of state and local government officials, the prisons, both federal and state, our local county judge, our jail, and also our detention centers in the state.

Elise Townsend:

We first had to, and it was incredible, we brought in the community, the entire Pascua Yaqui community, but also the entire Tucson Pima County community to be able to help us, to find our people. That was probably the most difficult task we had in the beginning, was because of state and federal detention centers that there really was no way to find Native Americans, much less specific to Pascua Yaqui. So, it's been an incredible journey for a year and a half, and we've been able to, again, make a lot of partnerships with people from all over the area.

Elise Townsend:

I think that we started this being able to speak with Counsel about eight or nine years ago. So long before we applied for the grant, we wanted to make sure this is where the Tribe wanted to go, is to embrace those citizens who were not there with them any longer. And we definitely got support and have had continual support from Council. The one thing we do probably that a lot of tribes might not do is we give a lot of step by step to Council, so they know exactly where we're at with everything. We're a smaller tribe compared to some of the other ones, I think there's 14,500 actual members of the Pascua Yaqui tribe, but the recidivism rate was great, as it is with all the different tribes.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:38:04]

Elise Townsend:

With all the different tribes.

Elise Townsend:

After we found our people, we wanted to start while they were still incarcerated, be able to make that connection, be able to know more about them, be able to reach out, let them know that we were there and that we cared. And we still started with a shotgun effect, again, because we're trying to find our people, and then narrowed it down as we started finding individuals who were a part of the Tribe, and then some of the other local tribes who had some affiliation with the Pascua Yaqui.

Elise Townsend:

We started with an intake form, being able to communicate with them. Arizona holds 95% of our participants. Current participants come from Arizona Department of Corrections. We start at least six months in and start working on the

reentry plan, so when they do come out, they're moving at a quicker pace. They're anticipating great things. They receive great things. They receive that hope, that inspiration.

Elise Townsend:

We start working on resumes while they're still incarcerated. What jobs do they want to do? We look at capacity and capability versus what they've done in the past so that we can help them put those educational or training steps in place so when they come out, that they can move forward. There's so many things we've learned during this process for a year and a half. I know, Tony, I can't imagine 17 years now. We're at a year and a half, and we've learned so much.

Elise Townsend:

I'm starting my third notebook on things. Maybe we should have tweaked a little bit, but I will tell you that we have testimonial after testimonial of people who came back. And we did a thank you to Council for letting us be able to participate in this grant. And I will tell you, I had lines of people wanting to thank the Council for that piece and to be able to think of them and to give to them. I will tell you, they feel very much a part of the community now, and they're embraced by all.

Elise Townsend:

We do everything. Like I said, we start communicating with a large intake form, and then followed up by when they come out, they go through an entire criminogenic and behavioral health assessment. And then, we match them with addiction support if that's needed, behavioral health support, all those things to be able to help them keep their life, including setting them up with their PCP to be able to actually get their medication continued on. So, there's so many steps; transportation, housing, education, training.

Elise Townsend:

Employment is a strong suit of ours, and we've been able to place people in promising careers, not just entry-level jobs. And it's very exciting to be part of this. And that's pretty much our program. Like I said, we're a year and a half in, and we're clicking away and excited to be part of this and the opportunity that we have had.

Elise Townsend:

Now, I have the esteem privilege to welcome and introduce Hazel Hindsley from the Saint Croix Reintegration Program.

Hazel Hindsley:

Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to welcome you from Northwestern Wisconsin, and it is currently snowing again. And it's April. So, I just want to say hello this afternoon, and I want to say thank you again to Ruben for that beautiful prayer that got us going this afternoon. I also want to thank Stephanie for inviting me to talk about our program here at Saint Croix.

Hazel Hindsley:

Just a little bit about our community here at Saint Croix, we are in the northwest corner of the state of Wisconsin. And it was in the year 2017 that our tribe decided that they would fund a program that would serve those Tribal individuals that had come from incarceration. They asked me to develop a program around it. So, what I went ahead and did was set up three focus group meetings. One of them being with members of the community that had been incarcerated and were back in the community. I also set up meetings with our local law enforcement, probation, EOD mental health. And the third focus group was with our tribal community members or family members that had individuals who had been through incarceration.

Hazel Hindsley:

And from that, I developed that very first program, and it was in 2017. We actually did not get a grant from BJA under Second Chance Act until 2019. And during that time, our very first goal was to set up the task force that we currently have. And it is probably one of the more key items that provided for our success because, in this task force, we work directly with probation and parole agents from the three counties that our reservation is located in. We also work with some local agencies like the vocational rehabilitation program. We work with housing programs. We also pull together our programs from our tribe that not only provide housing, education, but also mental health and substance abuse services.

Hazel Hindsley:

The Task Force is key to what we are doing. We have gotten to know each other, not only by sight, but we know what each of our departments is doing and what's happening, so that I think the best thing that came out of that Task Force was the very first MOU with the State of Wisconsin Department Corrections, which was signed in January of this year. And that provides for our Tribe and our case managers to work directly with probation and parole. And we are included now all the way from pre-release until the time that they come home to the community.

Hazel Hindsley:

We have two case managers, and what they do is they will work with the probation and parole. And because we know the communities and we know the families; I think that we're more able to help them establish a release plan that is going to succeed for those individuals when they return home.

Hazel Hindsley:

The other part of our program that I felt offers us a lot of success is the fact that we do collaborative care within our work with the service providers. And that is, we have one care plan. All our probation, substance abuse, mental health, bulk rehab, everybody works together on that one plan for that individual, and everybody knows what's going on. So, by doing that then, I mean, the client does not have to duplicate services or anything like that because everybody's working together, and they see what needs to get done and just provides a lot more of support for that individual.

Hazel Hindsley:

Last but not least, one of the more important things that I think that we do and what we provide ... And my belief way back when I started in 2017 is that I believe that culture is our medicine. And I wanted to read to you our mission statement. Our mission statement is (speaking in foreign language). what that translates to from the Ojibwe language is that we support our tribal members returning home from incarceration, along with their healing journey, through peer mentorship, culture, and community connections and services.

Hazel Hindsley:

For Native Americans, our culture and our traditions define us as a people; strong, intelligent, and resilient. It's not who and what we are, but there are such things as alcohol, drugs, criminal justice involvement, and other missteps that can take the beauty away from our lifestyles. And we're here to help them find that way again. We are all Ojibwe, which is, in our language, warriors within. And we can fight these challenges together. Our program seeks to address your needs from a Western point of view, as well as help you gain insights into yourself from a cultural perspective.

Hazel Hindsley:

Like I said, the culture is providing something for our community members as they come home, and we want them to become strong individuals again as they reconnect to their families and our community. So, thank you all for having me here, and I guess now we go into a panel discussion.

Stephanie Autumn:

Yes. Thank you, Hazel, Janel, Tony, Elise, for your wisdom. You should each have your own 90-minute online learning event. And maybe we will be able to build that in the future. And looking at the chat box, there's a lot of questions. I want to let our participants know that everybody will get a copy of the PowerPoint and contact information of our presenters today. I want to give our presenters a chance to drink a little bit of water, to catch their breath, and I'd like to circle back to some of the vision statements that were shared.

Stephanie Autumn:

So, Amber Miller, she's a staff attorney in Yurok Tribal Court, and she's a new Second Chance Act grantee. Part of their vision is to create a feasible case management model to help with reintegration into family and culture and building responsibility and community by focusing on giving back and vocational and educational development. Thank you for sharing that, Amber.

Stephanie Autumn:

Part of what I heard, and I'm sure that you all heard, is almost in our communities, we have that belief about we are all related and being a good relative. And I would say that probably as high as 85% of our families are impacted by incarceration. Most of us have a relative or a loved one that has gone through this. And often times, what we hear from families whose loved ones that are incarcerated, whether it's a jail or a prison, is that they're forgotten, that they're not getting the necessary support from the Tribe or from programs. So, really appreciating the work that you all do and appreciating the work that our panel, our participants do in their community. And I hope next year at this time, that we'll see even more Tribal grantees with the fiscal year 2022 solicitation.

Stephanie Autumn:

With that, we're going to move into the Tribal Reentry Roundtable Discussion. And my first question will be to Tony and Hazel. And you shared a little bit about it, but if you could each just give one example of a state and federal partnership that you established, that's new. Before your reentry program, that you did not have. Please share a state and federal partnership and how did it really support your reentry program and those that you're serving? Tony, let's go over to you.

Tony Fish:

Thank you. That's actually a very good question. I guess, on the state side, let me start with that. I've been working with, actually, drug court to ... We have a lot of our citizens who have these low-lying drug offender offenses. And we see

that as one of the needs that our people have, so working closely with the municipal and also the state drug courts to better provide services for them, as far as the drug testing, the counseling. Basically, we provide the services as far as the social service side of things that they need, and the drug court provides the drug testing and, basically, the administration to the judges, the reports back and forth, so that we work together on the one individual to get them in a better place and to get them basically crime-free.

Tony Fish:

Another case on the federal side will be working with, like I mentioned, the probation, the federal probation and parole officers. A lot of our citizens, since the McGirt ruling, are now being turned over to the tribe. And the tribe is, of course, the federal side of things. So, we have contracts with different detention centers to actually hold our citizens in. And working with the federal side of things, if they file on the McGirt ruling, then they either have to be resentenced in a federal court from the state court, or they have to be retried altogether, depending on how their case unfolds.

Tony Fish:

So, working closely with the federal probation and parole officers, a lot of times they are getting resentenced to the federal side of things, and then working closely with them to make sure they have adequate needs addressed, assessed, and working to a positive outcome with them. And, I will say that it's been a good thing working on a federal side because it seems like our vision and our mission was one and the same.

Stephanie Autumn:

Thank you, Tony. And, Hazel, if you could give one example.

Hazel Hindsley:

I think the example ... I just shared a little bit about it ... was that we established an MOU with the state of Wisconsin Department of Corrections. And it is probably the first one of its kind. And the reason that we did that was because we work with primarily three counties, but there's also a fourth county where a lot of our tribal members may receive probation services from. So, rather than to do individual MOUs with every county, we decided to go regional. And so, we do have a regional Memorandum of Agreement with the Northwest Wisconsin part.

Hazel Hindsley:

And basically, everybody knows about it, so that every time that we have an individual coming out of either the state or federal prisons, then we're notified. And then, our case managers then will work with that probation or parole officer in developing the pre-release plan for that individual. Prior to this, we would get notified after they got home. We did not know that they would be coming home, so we would not have any input whatsoever into that person's plan. And I think it works better now. We constantly get calls from them.

Hazel Hindsley:

I mean, it's not like we have people coming home all the time. Our population is not that great, but every time, we know three, four months ahead of time when someone's coming home.

Stephanie Autumn:

Thank you, Tony. Thank you, Hazel. Now, I'm going to go over to Janel. Janel, could you share an example of a cultural-based approach that is proving successful? I know you gave an overview. Could you dig a little deeper in terms of cultural-based approaches, really supporting your clients to come home to themselves, their families, and their community?

Janel McFeat:

Sure, there's so many, but I know I have two minutes for this response. But I really wanted to focus in on the Talking Circles and those restorative Circles, where they are being welcomed home back to their community. And I was reading a book. It's called Introducing Healing Circles and Talking Circles into Primary-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [00:57:04]

Janel McFeat:

Care and this was by Lewis Mehl-Madrona. And he talks about, the Talking Circle prevents reactive communication and directly responsive communication, and it fosters deeper listening and reflection and conversation. Talking circles are used throughout the country in tribal and non-tribal, inpatient and outpatient drug and alcohol centers, group homes, with us, with pre and post release services either in the jail or outside the jail, again, because our wheelhouse is jails.

Janel McFeat:

So, they effectively foster respect, model good listening skills, settle disputes, resolve conflicts and build self-esteem. So, these TCircles, I would absolutely, say are instrumental in building relationships and helping the person that's coming out of incarceration in this Native American practice that's been here forever, rooted in Native American culture are these talking circles. And we're just putting a little bit of a twist on it and we're proving that to be really successful and even in this book, they're talking about it and they said, "Participants have reported that this is one of the most

moving and spiritual experiences they have ever encountered." And we definitely, experience the same results so I would say the talking circles.

Stephanie Autumn:

Thank you, Janel. And we know with Talking Circles there's many different types of Talking Circles that we can seed in or reentry programs from healing to case management, bringing families back together and really planting that seed. If you haven't already, if you're thinking of starting a program, really look into the Indigenous model of Restorative Practices and thank you Janell, for that. I'm going to go over to Elise now. Elise, if you could share with us an example or a pathway of how you're lifting up your most impacted Tribal citizens to really help them contribute to the success of your program and to be able to find those pathways to wellness once they return home.

Elise Townsend:

Thank you, Stephanie. Sure. I'm thinking that probably, the best example we can give is the example of being able to help them navigate. What to expect when they come out of prison, what they can look forward to, some of the barriers that they'll be dealing with when they get out. The connection to the cultural side while they're still incarcerated, being able to send videos to them on an iPad, to be able to watch it makes them feel more in touch with their community and builds the capacity to be able to embrace it when they come out. Being a partner with probation and parole and being their advocate or their... Not so much partnership with probation and parole which we are but we are also there to help them to be able to think of this situation in a different light and look at them as being people who are trying to assist them and being successful instead of wanting to fail and sent back to prison.

Elise Townsend:

I think those are some of the items that we've worked very diligently on to be able to show them that we care and that we really do want them, we want everyone to be successful on this program. Our community members are just so happy with that. And then asking them to tell other people about the program, I think that's been an incredible opportunity for them to be able to sit there and talk to their friends and associates in prison, still incarcerated, letting them know that this is the answer. So that's what we're doing.

Stephanie Autumn:

Thank you, Elise. And I believe you also provide skill building capacity to integrate some of the clients coming back to the community into your program and mentorship and also sometimes with jobs, I just wanted to plant a seed, part of what we know our research is telling us in Indian Country, we know how important it is when you're removed from the community. I'm hearing a lot of language now that we talk about the missing and murdered Indigenous relatives that we're also now having another way to look at missing and that's our relatives that are in jail and that's our relatives that are in prison.

Stephanie Autumn:

And how important that pre incarceration, that incarceration, contact and programming and support for connection is in order to ensure that they have a pathway, our relatives have a pathway to success when they return home so thank you. And now Janel, back to you with our last question. Janel, you have a very diverse task force and I'm wondering if you could share because I think it will really help our participants who are thinking about growing their reentry community, how to really think outside that circle in terms of really important components of developing a Task Force. Could you share a little bit about the diversity of your task force?

Janel McFeat:

Absolutely. And I wanted to mention Hazel, you were talking a little bit about this, your reentry Task Force and how key and how important it is. And I will ditto that because that's actually, where we formed an MOU with DOC as well because we've had the Task Force for eight years. This has been a huge part of our program, really building relationships eight years ago and trying to get Federal, State, Local Tribal Agencies to the table, Department of Corrections, the Tribal communities. This is a huge community effort here in Kitsap County. It is completely supported by our just local county commissioners; it's supported on a statewide level with our Reentry State Council and it's supported in many ways. And that's where the real good work happens, are in these meetings. So, we're talking about innovation, what works, how can we build relationships between the Tribal and non-tribal communities?

Janel McFeat:

They're beautiful, we meet once a month and now that we have it down, it's where we see a lot of curriculum come out of that, a lot of ideas and we get a really big group of people. We have over 200 on the list but not all 200 attend every single time but if it's a big event or we're discussing something really powerful that needs to be heard, we get a lot of people to the table. And I wanted to say in closing on this question is, so our mission statement for our task force is, to promote the successful reintegration of justice involved individuals by embracing a human dignity reentry model because that's what we're trying to do. And our core values are centered around, they're client focused trauma informed,

restorative, fostering hope, approaching it through a community collective and a human dignity approach. And so we've had eight years of this and if we didn't have that group, I'm not sure where we would be. So very important to figure out a reentry task force for your community.

Stephanie Autumn:

Thank you, Janel. We're going to take a moment before we move on in the discussion. Thank you, Elise, Tony, Hazel, for this discussion. And again, our discussion could be 90 minutes and maybe we can do that in the future as we move forward with best practices and tribal communities. We just want to take a breath and I want to circle back to another vision statement shared by Matthew Lamont. They were newly funded in 2020 and he's the director of the Cherokee Nation Re-entry Program. And their vision is overall holistic healing for participants leading to positive family interactions and safe communities. So thank you, Matthew and glad that you're on and for sharing this.

Stephanie Autumn:

Part of putting these best practices in Indian Country together was not only having the depth and breadth of talent and expertise that you just listened to on our panel discussion and in the presentation but also to really plant some seeds to continue thinking and building your reentry program. And one of the first resources that we would like to share with you is the Bureau of Justice Assistance "Planning a Reentry Program. It's a toolkit for Tribal communities for those of you that are just starting, I would say there's so many templates, so many different tools that you could really think about to be able to do some of pieces of work like our presenters did. The information provided in the toolkit, came from Tribal reentry programs and was developed by the Center for Court Innovations. And I believe one of my colleagues is going to be putting that link in the chat box.

Stephanie Autumn:

So please if you haven't already looked, please look at the Bureau of Justice Assistance "Planning and Reentry Program resource. Another great resource that I often go to in working with Tribal communities that I'm assigned to is the National Indian Health Board who have resources from homegrown reentry programs, Tribal best practices in terms of those of you that are working on the ground and really focusing of how to integrate practices that feel like us, that have the outcomes that we want to see in terms of the holistic healing of mind, body and spirit for our relatives that have been incarcerated. There's a lot of resources in the National Indian Health Board Reentry Population Programming Toolkit. And I really would urge each and every one of you to take a look at that resource and I believe that's going to be put in the chat box as well for all of you. And we'll be mailing this information to you post this webinar.

Stephanie Autumn:

And then for those of you that haven't done much research, please search the resources with the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. They have some really great articles in terms of reentry in Native American communities and really focusing like Janelle and our other , our panelists were talking about really coming at this work from strength based approaches . Part of what, in my history of working in reentry is I always tell clients, "I work with, you are only a portion. minute in time in terms of that decision that landed you in jail or in prison. You have so many strengths that you can build on as a human being to come back to your community." So a lot of the resources that are in some of these article from the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, really focus on not only resilience but then looking at our own communities. How can we better welcome our relatives back home policy wise? Janelle talked about restorative practices.

Stephanie Autumn:

Well, that actually, spills over into restorative policies for our relatives that are coming home in terms of their access to services, housing, jobs and being able to reintegrate back into the community and with their family. So we're going to take a moment. And if you can, in the chat box before we do our closing. If you'd be willing to share one of these things you could share, "I'm leaving this webinar with new knowledge on," or you can share, "I have knew ideas about blank," or you can share, "I would like more information on," that way when I circle back with my colleagues, we can make sure that you're getting the information that you need post this webinar. This webinar was intended to spark a light, to really move you forward in communicating with your colleagues across Indian country that are doing this work. Please get a hold of me if you'd like more information about resources. And as I said before, we'll be sending out the contact information of all our esteemed presenters.

Stephanie Autumn:

In your chat box, what have you learned, what new ideas do you have or what would you like more information on? I'm going to scroll down. I see the resources in there, new ideas about Talking Circle. Hey Terry, thank you. I can help you with that. I see, I believe Julius put some resources in there around prison policy, bringing more wellness to reentry processes. Thank you for that. And we see one of our participants is leaving this webinar with new knowledge on Indian country, across its border, more information about sober living so thank you for sharing that. And will be responding

post this webinar in terms of some of the new ideas and resources that you would like. And with that said, I'd like to turn it over to Tony Thank you to provide our closing. Tony, it's all yours.

Tony Fish:

Stephanie Autumn: Thank you to all of you. Thank you to the team at AIR who provided all of our technical support so that we could gather remotely through technology today in these learnings. And I would urge anyone who hasn't gone to our NRRC's website to please do so. You'll see the website right up there in the slide and for more information post this webinar, please go to info@nationalreentryresourcecenter.org.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:15:08]

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Page 1 of 2